Vol. VII. Numb. 7

THE OBSERVATOR.

On the Petition of the Scotch *Merchants, and their Complaint of being deny'd the Draw-backs, and other Encouragements ſtipulated by the Union. The Danger of provoking the* Scots *at ſuch a Juncture as this; and the great Advantages we might reap from their Fiſhery, and other Trade.*

From **Saturday**, March 6. to **Wednesday**, March 10. 1708.

Obſ. YOU told me laſt Day, *Roger*, of a Letter from ſome *Scotch* Merchants, with their Petition to the Houſe of Commons incloſ'd, about their being deny'd the Benefit of the Draw-backs, which are allow'd them by the *Union*-Act.

Country-m. Yes, Maſter, the Petition is as follows:

" *To the Honourable, the Knights, Citizens, and Bur-*
" *geſſes, in Parliament aſſembl'd. The humble Peti-*
" *tion of* Thomas Coutts, Gilbert Stewart, *and*
" William Gordon, *Merchants, on Behalf of them-*
" *ſelves, and other* North Britains, *concern'd in the*
" Fiſhing-Trade; *humbly ſheweth,*

" THAT by the eighth Article of the Act of
" *Union*, it is enacted, *That all Fiſh exported*
" *from* Scotland, *to Parts beyond the Seas, which ſhall*
" *be cur'd with foreign Salt only, ſhall have the ſame*
" *Eaſes*, Præmiums, *and Draw-backs, as are, or ſhall*
" *be allow'd to Exporters of the like Fiſh from* England.
" That for Encouragement of the Herring-Fiſhing,
" there ſhall be allow'd and pay'd to the Subjects
" Inhabitants of *Great Britain*, (during the Allow-
" ances for other Fiſh) ten Shillings and five Pence
" Sterling, for every Barrel of white Herrings, that ſhall
" be exported from *Scotland*. That upon the Faith
" and Credit of the ſaid Act, your Petitioners have
" cur'd with foreign Salt only, and exported from
" *Scotland*, into foreign Parts, ſeveral Quantities of
" white Herrings, and other Fiſh. That your Peti-
" tioners have apply'd themſelves to the Collectors
" of her Majeſty's Cuſtoms, and other proper Offi-
" cers in *Scotland*, for Payment of the ſaid ten Shil-
" lings and five Pence Sterling *per* Barrel of white
" Herrings, and alſo for the Eaſes, *Præmiums*, and
" Drawbacks, by the ſaid Act allow'd upon Ex-
" portation of other Fiſh, by them ſo cur'd and
" exported: Yet the ſaid Officers not only refuſe to
" pay your Petitioners the ſaid ten Shillings and five
" Pence Sterling, *per* Barrel, for the white Herrings
" by them ſo cur'd and exported; but even to
" make out Debentures for the Eaſes, *Præmiums*,
" and Draw-backs, in and by the ſaid Act al-
" low'd; of which your Petitioners have oft com-
" plain'd to the Commiſſioners of her Majeſty's Cu-
" ſtoms, yet they have not been able to obtain any
" Relief. Wherefore your Petitioners moſt hum-
" bly pray your Honours to afford them ſuch Re-
" lief in the Premiſes, as to your Great Wiſdom
" ſhall ſeem meet,

" *And your Petitioners ſhall ever pray*, &c.

Obſ. Well, *Roger*, what do they ſay in their Letter?

Country-m. Why, Maſter, they ſay, you were very generous to take Notice in your *Obſervator* of the 3d Inſtant, of the Hardſhips put upon the *Scots*, both before and ſince the Union; particularly as to the Trouble they had about the importing of their Wines, Brandies, *&c.* and now about their Draw-backs ſince the Union. As to the firſt, they own the Juſtice done them by the Houſe of Commons, in their Addreſs to the Queen, upon which that Reſtraint was taken off; but I find, they ſtill complain of the Damage they ſuſtain'd by the Spoiling and Leakidge of their Goods, and the Loſs of their Market.

Obſ. And what do they ſay about being refus'd their *Draw-backs*, and the Encouragment of ten Shillings and five Pence for every Barrel of white Herrings they export?

Country-m. They ſay, Maſter, " 1. That the Re-
" fuſal of the Draw-backs, is a Denial of what's
" their undoubted Right, by the expreſs Words of
" the eighth Article of Union. 2. That the ten
" Shillings and five Pence granted for every Barrel
" of white Herrings exported after the 1ſt of *May*,
" was given them for an Encouragment to the
" white Herring-Fiſhing, and made Uſe of as a
" principal Argument to bring them unto the U-
" nion; becauſe, in that Article, they had the
" *Dutch* to ſtruggle with; and this Grant was in-
" ſiſted upon, as what would be of mighty Ad-
" vantage to all the Inhabitants of that Part of
" *Great Britain*.

Obſ. Alas! good Gentlemen, did they never hear, that by ſprinkling of ſome Money in proper Hands, the Royal Fiſhery, as 'twas call'd, came to nothing in King *Charles* the IIs Time? And that tho' the *Dutch* have made their Boaſts for above theſe hundred Years, that the Herring-Fiſhing is a richer Mine to them, than all thoſe of the *Indies*; yet our Stateſmens Eyes being once blinded with Bribes, they made the whole Iſland as blind as themſelves; ſo that there was ſcarce a Herring or Cod, *&c.* to be found in our Seas by any of our own People, tho' the *Dutch* could find them by Shoals. But go on, *Roger*: What do the *North Britains* ſay farther?

Country-m. They ſay, Maſter, " That by deny-
" ing them the Draw-backs and Encouragments
" above-mention'd, their Fiſhing is wholly at a
" Stand. That as before the Union, their Salt was
" cheap, their Eaſes and *Præmiums* were encoura-
" ging in Proportion. That now they can have no
" Salt, but what was imported before the 1ſt of
" *May*; for which they pay three times the Rate
" as formerly; ſo that without the Draw-backs,
" *&c.* 'tis impoſſible for them to cure or ſalt Fiſh,
" if they have them in ever ſuch Plenty at their
" Doors: So that inſtead of encouraging that valu-
" able and moſt improvable Branch of Trade, this
" Denial is the moſt effectual Method could be
" thought on to deſtroy it; and that now there
" ſeems nothing wanting to compleat the Ruin of
" that Part of the Iſland, but the taking off the
" Duty of the *Dutch* Linnen.

Obſ. A melancholy Story indeed, *Roger*. I was in Hopes we ſhould have never play'd any more at the Game call'd *Engliſh* and *Scotch*; that we ſhould have been all honeſt *Britains*; and that one Part of the ſame Nation ſhould no more have oppreſs'd the other: But, by this Petition, it would ſeem to be otherwiſe; and that the *Scots* muſt be cramp'd, whether in an united or ſeparate State: But whoever be the Adviſers to thoſe Meaſures, *Roger*, are wretched Politicians, if not Enemies to the Government, and the Welfare of *England*, as well as of *Scotland*, if we muſt ſtill uſe that Diſtinction; for nothing can be more plain, than that the Fiſhery of the *Scotch* Seas, improv'd by *Engliſh* Money and Induſtry, may enable this Iſland to out-do all *Europe* in the Fiſhing-Trade; and prove

as

as inexhauſtible a Mine of Riches, and as conſtant a Nurſery of Sea-men to us, as it has done to the *Dutch*, without giving them any juſt Ground of Complaint of our interfering with them, or of laying the leaſt Reſtraint upon them, but only by improving our own Situation, and the other natural Advantages, which God, by his Providence, has given us.

Country-m. In my Country Opinion, Maſter, the Authors of thoſe Provocations to the *Scots* at ſuch a Juncture as this, or indeed at any Time, now that we are all one, ought to be puniſh'd as Enemies to the Nation, and Favourers of the Pretender: For to me it ſeems plain, the ill Treatment that People have met with of late, muſt have been deſign'd on purpoſe to increaſe his Party there, and to make good the Expectations of the *French*, who, according to all our publick News, depend upon being join'd by conſiderable Numbers when they arrive in that Country; and if the *Gazette* ſay true, have Hoſtages from thoſe who invited them, for making good their Promiſe.

Obj. Tho' humanly ſpeaking, *Roger*, we have no great Cauſe to fear the Deſigns of the Pretender at preſent, conſidering the Zeal both Houſes of Parliament have expreſs'd againſt him, the good Fleet we have at Sea, the powerful Aſſiſtance we are to expect from the *Dutch*, from our own Troops already embark'd at *Oſtend*, and from the main Body of the *Scots*, who are known to be zealous Proteſtants: Yet, we may certainly be in Danger, ſome Time or other, if we entertain Vipers in our own Boſom, who had a Hand in the tyrannical Meaſures of the late Reigns, who have all along been noted for Enmity to the *Scots*, who conſtantly gave into all the Meaſures that provok'd them, and who have been the Promoters of the late Injuries they complain of. Therefore, *Roger*, 'tis my Opinion, that in the preſent Poſture of Affairs, the *Scots* ſhould be cheriſh'd with all imaginable Kindneſs; that ſince our Intereſt and theirs cannot be ſeparated, without endangering both, they ought to be allow'd the ſame Liberty and Privilege in Trade, and otherwiſe, that we have; and that all Endeavours be us'd to encourage the Commerce of that Country, by *Engliſh*-mens venturing Money in their Funds of Trade, and particularly in their Fiſhery; as to the wonderful Product of which, there was a Book printed by one *John Keymore*, in 1601, and reprinted by Order of the Lord Mayor of *London*, ſoon after King *Charles* the II's Reſtauration, when that Fiſhery was talk'd of, and good Acts made in *Scotland* for encouraging it; but ſome Great Miniſters of State being bought off, as 'twas then generally thought, the Deſign miſcarry'd, tho' that Author undertook to demonſtrate, that there is more Wealth rais'd out of Herrings, and other Fiſh, in our Seas, by neighbouring Nations in one Year, than the King of *Spain* has from the *Indies* in four; and that there were 20000 Ships and other Veſſels, and about 400000 People, then ſet on Work both by Sea and Land, and maintain'd only by fiſhing upon the Coaſts of *England*, *Scotland*, and *Ireland*. This ſmall Tract I find reprinted here laſt Year, in a Book call'd the *Phœnix*, where ſuch as are curious, may ſee how the Author makes good his Propoſition.

Country-m. If it be ſo, Maſter, that the *Scots* have ſuch a valuable Fiſhery, and other Funds of Trade, 'tis the greateſt Madneſs, as well as Injuſtice in the World, for us to ſuffer them to be any longer trick'd or oppreſs'd, by which they may be provok'd; and we our Selves loſe the ineſtimable Profit of ſuch a valuable Commerce.

Obj. You are perfectly right, honeſt *Roger*; and 'tis my Opinion, if ſuch Meaſures be ſtill perſiſted in, as the *Scots* complain of, that we ought to join with them in finding out, and impeaching the Promoters of them, as Enemies to the Queen and Country; for whatever ſome People may think on't, we are in more Danger by ſuch ill deſigning Men here, than by all the *Scotch* Lords, who are ſaid to be with the Pretender, or to have invited him over. But of this, more another Time, *Roger*.

Advertiſements.

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